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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6754  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7717  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3457  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6454  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1772  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1370  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8098  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001084

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: FIRST SESSION OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT: POMP AND  
CEREMONY

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1056

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 998

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: After an unexpectedly strong performance in the parliamentary elections, the Congress Party and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government it leads will convene both houses of the Indian Parliament from June 1-9. The highlight of the short session will be President Patil,s address to a joint session of both houses presenting the broad contours of the UPA agenda for the next five years. This session will include the swearing in of all 543 members of the 15th Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) and the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The rest of the session will be largely ceremonial, with more substantive matters to be addressed in later sessions. The "monsoon" session has been tentatively scheduled for early July and will focus on the general budget. End Summary.

First Session: Short and Mostly Ceremonial  
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[1](#)2. (U) A day after the Indian President swore-in the first tranche of 19 cabinet members on May 22 (ref A), Prime Minister Manmohan Singh chaired a cabinet meeting that decided to convene its Parliament from June 1-9. The first few days of the session will be taken up by the swearing in of the 543 members of the 15th Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha will also elect its Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

[1](#)3. (U) The highlight of this short session will be President Pratibha Patil address to a joint-sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on June 4. The Presidential address, which is written by the government, will outline the UPA,s broad agenda and goals for its tenure in office. This will be followed by a debate on the motion of thanks, where the priorities and policies outlined by the President are debated in the separate houses of parliament. The last few days of this session will likely be taken up by Prime Minister Singh,s formal introduction of his 79-member ministerial team to the 15th Lok Sabha. The entire session will be wrapped up by June 9th, 2009 with the more substantive July session focusing on the general budget.

Speaker, Deputy - Under Negotiation

14. (SBU) The names for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament are still being negotiated within UPA leadership and with the opposition BJP. According to local media, Congress's front-runner for Speaker is V. Krishna Chandra Deo, Lok Sabha Member from Andhra Pradesh. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker serve as non-partisan leaders of the Lok Sabha and are expected to set aside their party affiliations. Once elected Speaker, the member submits her resignation to her party leadership. Sources report that the Congress leadership would like to have an unanimous election for these two posts and hope to offer the BJP the post of Deputy Speaker if the BJP agrees to support the UPA choice for Speaker. The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will be held on June 3, a day before the Presidential address to a joint session. However, the UPA's Tamil Nadu ally, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), would like to place its own T.R. Baalu as Deputy Speaker. Prime Minister Singh reportedly does not want T.R. Baalu in any position of power due to allegations of corruption and ineffectiveness stemming from his last cabinet stint. T.R. Baalu resigned from his cabinet position as Minister of Shipping, Road Transportation and Highways in 2009 amid controversy.

Comment: All Eyes on Congress

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15. (SBU) Comment: The newly formed Congress-led UPA government's first session will likely be largely non-controversial. The 15th Lok Sabha represents a younger India, with almost 20 percent of Lok Sabha members under the age of 45 years. Both the Congress and the BJP will likely save the debate for the July or Monsoon session which will focus on the budget and will present a much better opportunity for both sides to skirmish, assuming the BJP has found its feet after its devastating loss in the parliamentary elections. This time, the BJP is likely to find a more seasoned adversary. Congress is firmly in charge in both Parliament and Government due to its large margin of seats in Parliament. End Comment.

BURLEIGH